# Big Biller Secrets

### ***Presenter: Joe Ankus – President of Ankus Consulting***

Joe Ankus has been a legal search consultant since 1991 and is the President of Ankus Consulting based in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Joe graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, magna cum laude, with a concentration in Communication Systems and a minor from the Wharton School in Marketing. He graduated from the University of Florida College of Law, with honors, and was a Senior Editor of the Florida Law Review. Before becoming a legal recruiter, Joe was an associate with two of the nation's largest law firms. Joe is the current Executive Director of the National Association of Legal Search Consultants (NALSC) which is comprised of approximately 200 legal recruiting firms across the nation. He is also a top recruiting industry trainer offering customized training materials and individualized sessions to recruiting firms across the nation.

**About This Presentation**

In Joe's presentation, he shares his best tips, ideas, learning lessons, funny stories, and a retrospective of his success after completing 250,000 calls and 20+ years in the search industry.

## Meeting: "Big Biller Secrets" by Joe Ankus

**If you are reviewing this episode with a team, watch the entire Episode. Use the notes below in both weeks to identify the gaps between knowledge and application.**

**LISTENING SKILLS:** Joe shares that one of his secrets to success early on was the understanding that proper listening skills were critical; learning how to listen carefully was the most important asset he possessed. Veteran recruiters have a tendency to automatically assume, before a candidate or client finishes speaking, that they can complete the sentence. The recruiter might already even have a well-rehearsed rebuttal to deliver in response. Joe came to the revelation that he served his marketplace as a sounding board first, and recruiter second.

If you feel as though listening skills are an area of improvement for you, utilize the LACES Model below and review Module 5 of the NLE Foundation Training Program for expansion on this subject.

- **Listen** for what's being said and why it's being said - the words and the feeling. Listen for the need behind the statements or resistance.

- **Acknowledge** to satisfy the candidate's fundamental need for recognition. It is not agreeing. You are communicating that you either understand or desire to understand. It's been said that recruiters have two settings – *talking* and *waiting to talk*. Don't be one of those recruiters!

- **Clarify** to confirm your understanding of the situation or resistance coming from the candidate. Start with clarifying questions to ensure understanding before moving forward.

- **Expand** by suggesting alternatives, different approaches or recommendations that would assist in meeting the candidate's concerns or resistance.

- **Seek Agreement** to find common ground on all or a part of the issue to begin aligning your position with that of your candidate.

**SYSTEMS:** Joe has an organizational management system for his email that works for him and allows him to make sure nothing falls through the cracks. Joe makes his money by being proactive and executing forward-motion calls, while not allowing the reactive nature of emails to slow him down. How much time per day do you commit to spending in proactive, forward-motion activities? What systems do you need to create to maximize your opportunity to engage in proactive behaviors?

**PLANNING:** Joe highlights that if he doesn't have a clear direction and path in terms of the purpose behind his planning, he could make the mistake of confusing *activity* with *productivity*. Joe prioritizes his daily planning as follows:

1. Any offers he needs to close
2. Any interviews he needs to follow up on
3. Any candidates/clients he needs to prepare for interviews
4. Any candidates/clients he needs to set up interviews
5. Any follow-ups he needs to make regarding candidate resumes that were sent out
6. Any send outs he has to make

**WARM CALLS:** Timing is everything in recruiting. Joe understands this, and respects his candidates and clients best interests. Although sometimes our role as a recruiter is to nudge both parties forward, it is also essential to stay unbiased. Our interests are not important, it's those of your candidates and clients. If you spend your days trying to push people forward prematurely, it will come through on the phone and your market will more than likely respond with stifled answers and polite replies that won't allow you to truly understand underlying issues that need to be resolved.

**WARM CALLS:** Of course, we'd love for every call to be a warm call – one that is greeted with an overwhelmingly positive response. In time, this is easier to do as you'll master your market and only every so often have a truly introductory call. However, whether you are new in search or a veteran, Joe shares what he does to dissect a candidate or client prior to calling:

1. Review the company website for all relevant information and identify who to call – as either prospective candidates or hiring managers.
2. Execute a brief Google search on the contact to see what else he can find out about them. He is seeking any sort of connection that he can use to rapport build immediately (it could be hobbies, interests, people they know in common, etc.)
3. Perform a LinkedIn search to see if there are any mutual connections. If there are, Joe calls that connection first and gets their permission to use their name as a referral source.
4. Execute the outbound call to the contact with a concise introduction and compelling purpose for his call.

**RESUMES:** Joe makes a quick comment in that he tells his clients that they shouldn't expect a resume from him. His perspective is that they are paying him to select targeted individuals who meet their criteria – not send resumes. Additionally, no truly consultative relationships were ever built via email – you would much rather rely on your ability to communicate and sell your candidate on the front end versus relying on technology to negotiate for you.

In actuality, the resume should simply act as a reinforcement that you are representing the candidate you described on the phone – and you should have already gotten a commitment to interview based on your phone conversation with the hiring manager – not subject to the review of the resume. When you call your hiring manager, the conversation should be started with a sentence like:

> *"Jim, when we spoke last, you were looking for a (title) with (type of) experience. Has anything changed since we last spoke?"*
>
> *"Let me give you a quick update as to what the search has looked like on my end. Since we spoke last, I created a condensed list of the (# of) candidates in your area, within your parameters, that I know of who may be open to hearing about the opportunity you have at (client) company. I have reached out to all of them, and spoken personally with most. Of that group, several indicated interest that were then screened further based on the criteria you gave me initially. One particular individual stood out to me as one to put in front of you immediately, so I want to share his background and why I absolutely believe he is worth initially interviewing. If you are in front of your computer, go ahead and push send and receive on your email – you should have an email from me with his information and reasons for considering the opportunity at (client company)."*

If you don't feel you have this level yet of client control, a middle ground could be to ask the hiring manager to push send/receive on their email while you are on the phone with them. This can serve as a guide for the dialogue, as well as something for them to review while you are supplementing it with your professional recommendations and insights.

**ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:** Joe shares some essential questions he needs to know prior to conducting any search for a prospective client. Review the questions below; are any ones that you should incorporate into your own conversations?

- What is my contact's cell phone number and can I call them after hours during a search?
- What are the first three projects that will be assigned to the candidate after they are hired?
- What range is the base salary and what range is the bonus? Regarding the bonus, I want to know EXACTLY how it is calculated and what the historical payments have been.
- What amount of travel is involved and to where?
- How long has the position been open?
- Why is the position open?
- Is this search confidential or can the client name be used freely in recruiting calls and marketing efforts?
- How many candidates are currently under consideration?
- What stage are they in (as it relates to interviewing)?
- What is the client doing to fill the search? (Ads, multiple recruiters, personal contacts, etc.)
- Top 3 marketing "keys" client can share to make the search "come alive" for a candidate.
- Top 3 questions clients would like us to ask potential candidates.
- Who will conduct the first interview? Who will conduct follow-up interviews?
- Which firms or companies are off limits to recruiting (for any reason- good or bad)?
- Which firms or companies would the client appreciate seeing someone from and why?